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VIGIL OF FAITH,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

Charles F. Hoffman
BY C. F. HOFFMAN,

AUTHOR OF "GREYSLAER," &C.

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ERRATA.

Page 62, second line from the top instead of,
“And then be calm as ever.” Read,
And then be cold and calm as ever.

Same page, second line from the bottom, instead of
“Tell *me* if thou visitest,” &c. Read,
Tell if thou visitest, &c.

Page 72, fifth line from the bottom, instead of “*the* song,” read
“thy song,” and second line from bottom, “thou art,” instead
of “thou *are*.”

THE VIGIL OF FAITH,

A LEGEND OF THE ADIRONDACH MOUNTAINS.

I.

'T WAS in the mellow autumn time,
That revel of our masquing clime,
 When, as the Indian crone believes,
The rainbow tints of nature's prime,
 She in her forest banner weaves ;
To show in that bright blazonry,
How the young earth did first supply
Each gorgeous hue that paints the sky,
 Or in the sun-set billow heaves.

II.

'T was in the mellow autumn time,
When from the spongy swollen swamp,
 The lake a darker tide receives ;
When nights are growing long and damp ;
 And at the dawn a glistening rime
 Is silvered o'er the gaudy leaves :
When hunters leave their hill-side camp,
With fleet hound some, the dun-deer rousing,
In 'still-hunt' some, to shoot him browsing ;
 And close at night their forest tramp,
Where the fat yearling scents their fire,
 And, new unto their murderous ways,
Affrighted, feels his life expire
 As stupidly he stands at gaze,
Where that wild crew sit late carousing.

III.

'T was in the mellow autumn time,
When I, an idler from the town,
With gun and rod was lured to climb
Those peaks, mid which the HUDSON takes
His tribute from an hundred lakes ;
Lakes which the sun, though pouring down
His mid-day splendors round each isle,
At eventide so soon forsakes
That you may watch his fading smile
For hours around those summits glow
When all is gray and chill below ;
While, in that brief autumnal day
Still, varying all in feature, they
As mid their watery maze you stray
Will yet some wilding beauty show.

IV.

For he beholds, whose footfalls press
The mosses of that wilderness,
Each charm the glorious HUDSON boasts
Through his far reaching strand—
When sweeping from these leafy coasts,
His mighty march he sea-ward takes—
First pictured in those mountain lakes,
All fresh from nature's hand!
Some broadly flashing to the sun,
Like warrior's shield when first displayed,
Some, dark, as when the battle done,
That shield oft blackens in the glade.
Round one that on the eye will ope
With many a winding sunny reach,

The rising hills will gently slope
From turfy bank and pebbled beach.
With rocks and ragged forests bound,
Deep set in fir-clad mountains' shade,
You trace another where resound
The echoes of the hoarse cascade.

V.

Aweary with a day of toil,
And all uncheered with hunter's spoil,
Guiding a wet and sodden boat,
With thing, half paddle, half an oar,
I chanced one murky eve to float
Along the grim and ghastly shore
Of such wild water ;

Past trees, some shooting from the bank,
 With dead boughs dipping in the wave,
And some with trunks moss-grown and dank,
On which the savage, that here drank
 A thousand years ago, did grave
 His tale of slaughter.

VI.

Gazing amid these mouldering stems,
Through thickets from their ruins starting,
 To spy a deer-track, if I could,
I saw the boughs anear me parting,
 Revealing what seemed two bright gems
 Gleaming from out the dusky wood ;

And in that moment on the shore,
Just where I brushed it with my oar,
An aged INDIAN stood !

VII.

Nay ! shrink not, lady, from my tale,
Because erst moved by border story,
Thy thoughtful cheek grew still more pale
At images so dire and gory !
Nor yet—grown worldly since that time
Ask—half disdainful of my rhyme,
“ An INDIAN !—why, in theme so stale
There can be no new interest, can there ?
'T was but some hunter on his stand
Annoyed to see you near the land,
You took him for a panther !”

VIII.

It was just so, and nothing more ;
The deer-stand that I sought was here,
Where too the Indian came for deer ;
A civil fellow, seldom drunk,
Who dragged my leaky skiff ashore,
And pointed out a fallen trunk,
Where sitting I could spy the brink,
Beneath the gently tilting branches,
And shoot the buck that came to drink
Or wash the black-flies from his haunches.
With this he plunged into the wood
Saying he on the 'run-way' knew
Another stand, and quite as good
If but the night breeze fairly blew.

IX.

An hour passed by without a sign

Of buck or doe in range appearing ;

The wind began to crisp the lake,

The wolf to howl from out the brake,

And I to think that boat of mine

I'd better soon be campward steering :

When near me thro' the black'ning night

Again I saw those eyes so bright,

And as my swarthy friend drew nigher,

I heard these words pronounced in tone,

Lady, as silken as thine own,

“White man, we'd better make a fire.”

X.

Our kindling stuff lay near at hand—
Peelings of bark, some half uncoiled
In flakes, from boughs by age despoiled,
And some in shreds by rude winds torn ;
Dead vines that round the dead trees clung ;
Dry moss that from their old arms swung,
Tattered and stained—all weather-worn,
Like funeral weeds hung out to dry,
Or ensigns drooping mournfully ;—
These quickly caught the spark we fanned.
Branches, that once waved over-head,
Now brittlely crackling 'neath our tread,
Fed next the greedy flame's demand.
Lastly a fallen trunk or two—
Which, when from weedy lair we drew,

Across the blazing pyre we threw—

For savory broil supplied the brand.

XI.

Of hemlock-fir we made our couch,
A bed for cramps and colds consoling ;

I had some biscuits in my pouch,
A salmon-trout I'd killed in trolling ;

My comrade had some venison dried,
And corn in bear's lard lately fried :

And, on my word, I will avouch
That when we did our stock divide

In equal portions, save the last,
Apicius would not deride

The relish of that night's repast.

XII.

We talked that night—I love to talk
 With these grown children of the wild,
When in their native forest walk,
 Confiding, simple as a child,
They lose at times that sullen mood
 Which marks the wanderer of the wood,
And in that pliant hour will show
 As prodigal and fresh of thought
As genius when its feelings flow
 In words by feeling only taught.

XIII.

We talked—'t was first of fish and game,
 Of hunters' arts to strike their quarry,

Of portages and lakes whose name,
As uttered in his native speech,
If memory could have hoarded each,
A portage-labor 't were to carry.
Yet one whose length—it is a score
Of miles perhaps in length or more—
'T is glorious to troll,
I can recall in name and feature
From dull oblivion's scathe
Partly because in slim canoe
I since have tracked it through and through,
Partly that from this simple creature
I heard that night a tale of faith
Which moved my very soul.

XIV.

Yes INCA-PAH-CHOW ! though thy name
Has never flowed in poet's numbers,

And all unknown, thy virgin claim
To wild and matchless beauty, slumbers ;
Yet memory's pictures all must fade

Ere I forget that sunset view
When, issuing first from forest shade
A day of storms had darker made,

Thy floating isles and mountains blue,
Thy waters sparkling far away
Round craggy point and verdant bay—
The point with dusky cedars crowned,
The bay with beach of silver bound—

Upon my raptured vision grew.
Grew every moment, brighter, fairer,

As I, at close of that wild day,
Emerging from the green wood nearer,
Saw the red sun his glorious path
Cleave through the storm-cloud's dying wrath,
And with one broad triumphant ray
Upon thy crimsoned waters cast,
Sink warrior-like to rest at last.

XV.

"I like Lake INCA-PAH-CHOW well,"
Half mused aloud my wild-wood friend,
"Why, white-man, I can hardly tell,
For fish and deer, at either end
The rifts are good ; but run-ways more
There are by crooked IROQUOIS :

And RACKETT at the time of spearing,
As well as that for yarding moose,
Hath both, enough for hunters' use :
Amid these hills some lakes there are, show
More limpid waters to the eye ;
In some at night, I've seen the star glow
As if it dropped there from the sky ;
Better for trout I'll not deny
Are some, where leaves will earlier fall,
And mountain currents colder far, flow ;
I've plied my paddle in them all—
To me they are not INCA-PAH-CHOW !”*

* ‘Inca-pah-chow’ (*anglice*, LINDENMERE,) is so called by the Indians from its forests of Bass-wood or American Linden. It is better known perhaps by the insipid name of ‘Long Lake ;’ and is one of that chain of mountain lakes which though closely interlacing with the sources of the Hudson, discharge themselves through Rackett river into the St. Lawrence. They lie on the borders of Essex in Hamilton county, New York.

XVI.

There was a sadness in his tone
His careless words would fain disown ;
And now far back in memory
He seemed so much absorbed to be
I'd not molest his reverie ;
And then—in phrase I now forget,
 When I at last the silence broke—
In the same train of musing yet,
 He watched awhile the wreathing smoke
Curl from his lighted calumet,
 Ere answering, thus aloud he spoke :—

XVII.

“Years, years ago when life was new,
And long before there was a clearing
Among these ADIRONDACH-HIGHLANDS,
My chieftain kept his best canoe
On one of INCA-PAH-CHOW’s islands—
The largest, which lies tow’rd the north—
And there had built his shantie too.
A trapper now with years o’erladen,
He lived there with one only daughter,
A gentle but still gamesome maiden,
Who, I have heard, would venture forth,
Venture upon the darkest night
Across the broad and gusty water
To climb that cliff upon the main,
By some since called THE MAIDEN’S REST,

That foot save hers hath never pressed,
And watch the camp-fire's distant light,
Which told that she should see again
Her hunter when the dawn was bright."

XVIII.

He paused—looked down, then stirred the fire,
He smiled—I did not like that smile,
As leaning on his elbow nigher
His bright eyes glared in mine the while.
And I was glad that scrutiny o'er,
When neither had misgivings more,
While he his tale told as before.

XIX.

“White-man, thy look is open, kind,

Thou scornest not a tale of truth!

Should I in thee a mocker find,

’T would shame alike thy blood and youth.

I trust thee! well, now look upon

This withered cheek and shrunken form!

Can’st think, young man, *I* was the one

For whom that maiden dared the storm?

Yes, often, till a tribesman came—

It matters not to speak his name—

A youth as tall, as straight as I,

As quick his quarry to descry,

A hunter skillful in the chase,

As ever moccasin did lace.

—But thou shalt see him, if thou wilt
Gaze on the wreck since made by guilt.—

XX.

“ Often she dared to cross the wave
At midnight in the wildest weather,
While tempests round the peak would rave
From which she watched for nights together.
For he, that tribesman whom I loved,
Yes, loved as if he were my brother;
Had told her that the woods I roved
To feed the lodge where dwelt another;
Another who my lot did share,
And therefore claimed a hunter’s care;
Claimed it upon some distant shore,
From which I would return no more.

XXI.

“ All this in her had wrought no change,
No anxious doubt, no jealous fear,
But he meanwhile had words most strange,
Breathed in my gentle NŪL-KAH's ear,
Which made her wish that I were near :
Words strange to her, who, simple, true,
And only love as prosperous knew,
Shrank from the fitful fantasy,
Which seeming less like love than hate,
Would cloud his moody brow when he,
Gazing on her, arraigned the fate
Which could such loveliness create
Only to work him misery.
And when she heard that lying tale,
Her woman's heart could soon discover

Some double treachery might assail,
Through him, her unsuspecting lover ;
And Love in fear, now, fearless, brought her
On errand Love in hope first taught her.

XXII.

“ I came at last. She asked me naught—
It was enough to see me there ;
But of the friend who thus had wrought,
Though he now streams far distant sought,
She bade me in the woods beware.
A wound my coming had delayed,
And still too weak to use my gun,
I set the nets the old chief made ;
Baited his traps in forest glade ;

And sweetly after wooed the maid
At evening when my toils were done.

XXIII.

"'T was then I chose a grassy swale,
In which my wigwam frame to make ;
Sheltered by crags from northern gale,
Shaded by boughs, save tow'rd the lake.
The RED-BIRD's nest above it swung ;
The MA-MA-TWA there often sung ;
There too, when Spring was backward, first
Her shrinking blossoms safely burst ;
And there, when autumn leaf was sere,
Some flowers still stayed the loitering year.

XXIV.

“She learned full soon to love the spot,
For who could see and love it not ?
And there, when I the isle would leave,
And sometimes now my gun resume,
She’d slyly steal the mats to weave
Which were to line our bridal room.
Happy we were ! what love like ours,
Blossoming thus as fresh and free
As unrestrained as wild-wood flowers,
Yet keeping all their purity !

XXV.

“Happy we were ! my secret foe,
How dread a foe, I knew not then,

Remained to fish the streams below
That into CADARAQUI flow,
Returning to us only when
Some kinsmen on our bridal morn,
Impelled by a mysterious doom
Which with that fateful man was born,
Brought him to shroud the day in gloom
And blast our joys about to bloom.

XXVI.

"Just MANITOU ! O may the boat
That bears him to the spirit land,
For ages on those black waves float
Which catch no light from off its strand.
Float blindly there, still laboring on
Tow'rd shores 't is never doomed to reach ;

cross the ever widening sea

Float there till time itself is gone,
 And when again 't would seek the beach
From which with that lone soul it started,
 Baffling let *that* before it flee,
Till hope of rest hath all departed,
 And still when that last hope is gone,
A guideless thing float on, float on !

XXVII.

“ The birds of song had sunk to rest ;
 The eagle's tireless wing was furled ;
On INCA-PAH-CHOW's darkening breast
 The last few golden ripples curled ;
The distant mountains, bright before,
Now seemed to darken more and more
 Against the eastern sky,

Until a white-pine's slender cone,
Tapering above the hill-top, shone,
And showed the moon was nigh.
Our friends, they all stood gravely round
Waiting until that moon should rise,
The bridal moon whose aspect crowned
For good or ill our destinies:
The signal too, the hour had come,
When I could claim my bride and home.

XXVIII.

"Blushing at that fast-brightening sky,
When on her father's lodge it shone,
How did she shrink within, when I
Would lead that loved one to my own!

Forth stepped e'en then that murderous guest
Who grimly stood amid the rest,
 And, while his knife he drew,
With cry that made us all aghast,
And frantic gesture hurrying past,
 He sprang the threshold through.

XXIX.

“ A shriek ! and I with soul of flame
 Devoured the fearful space between,
Another and another came
 E'en while my grip was on his throat,
Where writhing in the dark unseen
 His victim in her gore did float ;
And life was oozing through each wound
 That gashed her lovely form about,

When hurling him upon the ground,
I bore her to the light without.

XXX.

“Aided by that untimely beam,
Which harbingered such bridal woes,
I watched its ebbing current gleam,
And watching would not, could not deem
That blessed life’s too precious stream
Growing each moment darker, colder,
E’en while I to my heart did fold her,
Already at its close.
She tried to speak—then pressed my hand,
And looked—oh looked into my eyes
As if through them the spirit-land
Did first upon her vision rise,

As if her soul that could not stay
Through mine might only pass away.

XXXI.

“ I know not when that look did fade,
Nor when did fail that dying grasp,
Nor how they loosed the lifeless maid
Stiffening within love’s desperate clasp.
The sod upon her grave was green,
The leaflet greening on the oak,
The autumn and the winter o’er
When I once more to sense awoke,
Awoke to know some joys had been
Which now to me could be no more.

XXXII.

“He still was there, that youth accurst,
 Who thus through blood his end had sought,
He who with frenzied love athirst
 Such wreck of loveliness had wrought.
He still was there, for while I breathed,
 With sense and feeling almost gone—
The aged father, thus bereaved,
 Raving the wretch should still live on—
 Of all our friends there was not one
Would deal the vengeance they believed
 ’T was mine on him to wreak alone.

XXXIII.

“He still was there. ’T was he that kept
A nurse’s watch while thus I slept:

Ever and ever by my side,
With anxious eye and noiseless tread,
Hanging about my fevered bed,

With none he would his task divide ;
Trembling, with jealous fears afraid,

When near the grave I seemed to hover,
Lest that bright land which claimed the maid,
Was opening too upon her lover.

XXXIV.

“And now, when no more languishing,
My mind and strength became renewed,

Amid the balmy airs of spring,
And I once more could take the wood ;
Think you he feared the bloody fate
Which blood will alway expiate ?
Oh no ! he looked too far before—
Looked far beyond this fleeting shore,
Where bliss will die as soon as born !
He hoped, he blindly trusted he
That on the instant that I woke,
Revenge would be so fierce in me,
I'd madly deal some deathful stroke
Would send his soul where hers was gone !

XXXV.

“But I—I knew too well his guile,
'T was whispered me in dreams the while.

I saw a form about my bed,
That alway shrunk from him with dread :
'T would come by night, 't would come by day,
But clearest in the moonbeam show,
Then alway as is nearer drew
Ere melting from my wistful view,
With palm reversed it seemed to say,
'If yet thou wilt not with me go,
Keep him—*Oh keep but him away!*'

XXXVI.

“ And did I not? aye, while the knell
Of youth and hope yet echoed by,
Did I not then allay thy fears,
Disturbèd soul, that his was nigh?
And o'er the waste of dreary years,

On which heart-withered doomed to dwell,

I look with wearying vision back—

Have I not on that desert track,

Sweet spirit, kept love's vigil well?

Oh have I not! Yes—though no more

I see at night those moon-touched fingers,

Still beckoning as they did of yore ;

And though the features of my love,

As near me still in dreams she lingers,

Look bright, as yon bright star above,

And peaceful, as in that blest time,

When our young loves were in their prime—

I know that, from the land of shades,

When wandering thus to haunt these glades,

The vigil to her soul is dear

I kept, and still am keeping here !

—Enough of this, thou still would'st know
How dealt I with my mortal foe !

XXXVII.

“ The stag that snuffs the breeze of morn,
Where first it lifts the birchen spray,
Gazing on lakes all newly born
From valley mists that roll away,
Treads not 'mid upland ferns more free,
Looks not with eye more bright below,
Than moved and looked that man, when he
Strode forth and stood beneath the tree
To bide my avenging hatchet's blow :
The crestless doe, whose faint limbs sink
Beside the rill to which they bore her—
Life-stricken on its very brink

That instant when she'd gasping drink
From the bright wave that leaps before her—
Lies not more lowly and forlorn,
All stretched upon the forest leaves,
Than 'neath the tree that Outcast lay,
When, by that gleaming hatchet shorn,
His warrior-tuft is cleft away,
And he the living doom receives
To wander thus where'er he may,
Of woman and of man the scorn.*

* In some tribes when the penalty of death is thus changed for that of degradation, the criminal who so regains his forfeited life is considered as *unsexed*. He then becomes the menial and slave of the first person who chooses to take possession of him, and is obliged to submit to tasks of exposure the most toilsome, and domestic offices the most humiliating; his master, or owner, (or *husband*, as he is sometimes whimsically called,) being permitted to exercise every species of tyrannical cruelty upon him, provided he shed not the blood of the poor wretch who is thus subjected to his caprices. See SCHOOLCRAFT; see also 'The Equawish,' in '*Life on the Lakes*' by the Author of '*Legends of a Log Cabin*.'

XXXVIII.

“A month went by ; the brushwood’s blaze
No more from that cold hearth ascended
Where the old chief his failing days,
Shortened by grief, had meanwhile ended :
A month, and that deserted isle
Was left alone to me and *her* !
The summer had begun to smile,
The winds of June the leaves to stir,
And flowers, that budded late the while,
To bloom above her sepulchre ;
Meek, pallid things, grave-nursed below,
That feebly there as yet would grow,
Brighter in coming years to blow—
And where was he whose fell despair
The Flower of Love laid bleeding there ?

XXXIX.

“Shooting from out the leafy land,
 Right opposite our island home,
There was a narrow spit of sand,
O'er which the wave, on either hand,
 Would fling at times its crest of foam.
And here—as I one morning stood
 Upon a rock which faced that beach—
I saw, wild rushing from the wood,
 Within my loaded rifle's reach,
A figure that distracted ran
 Until it gained the frothy marge,
And there, an unarmed, kneeling man,
 Bare his broad bosom to my charge !

XL.

“ I stood, but did not raise the gun—

Although it rattled in my grasp—

I stood and coldly looked upon

The suppliant, who, still lower bent,

His hands in agony did clasp,

As if the soul within him pent

Would rend its penal tenement.

At last, with low half smothered cry

And quivering frame, he gained his feet,

And to the woods began to fly,

Growing at every step more fleet,

But from that hour where'er he fled

As fleetly I too followèd !

XLI.

“One moment was enough to bind
Firmly my weapons on my head,
The strait was swum, and far behind
The crested waves effaced my tread
Upon the beach, o’er which I sped
So swiftly that the forest glade
At once the wanderer’s trail betrayed.
And though it led o’er rocky ledge,
Led oft within the pool’s black edge,
’T was soon revealed anew—
The springy moss just crisping back,
I saw upon his recent track,
Nor paused to trace it in the brook,
Whose alders still behind him shook
Where he had bounded through.

XLII.

“And—when again the stream he crossed,

Where in its forks, awhile I lost

His trail, amid the maze

Of severing rills, and runways wound

About the deer-lick’s trampled ground—

The very living things around,

Which in these forest depths abound,

The sable darting from the fern,

The gliding ermine—each in turn,

His whereabouts betrays:

From plunging beaver’s warning stroke,

From wood-duck whirring from the oak,

And screaming loon, alike I learn

Where lead the wanderer’s ways.

XLIII.

“ At length within a broken dell,
Where a gnarled beech the thunder’s shock
Had parted from the leaning rock,
Among its cable roots, he fell;
Where, panting, soon I saw him lie,
Shrivelling against the blasted trunk
With knees drawn up and cowering eye,
As if my avenging tread had shrunk
The miscreant there as I drew nigh.
I spoke not—but I gazed upon
That wolf with fangs and courage gone,
Gazed on his quailing features till
Their furtive glance was fixed by mine,
And I could see his writhing will
Her feeble throne to me resign.

XLIV.

“ He rose an abject, broken man,
He dared not fight—he dared not fly,
His very life in my veins ran,
Who would not let him cast it by ’
And still he is the thing that then
He wilted to, within that glen:
Living—if life be drawing breath—
But dead in all that last should die,
For him there is no farther death
Till from the earth he withereth.

XLV.

“ I hunt for him—I dress his food,
I guide his footsteps in the wood,

Or, when alone for game I'd beat,
Direct where we at night shall meet.
He cleans my arms—my snow-shoes makes;
He bales my shallop on the lakes,
And when with fishing-spear I glide
At mid-night o'er the silent tide,
 'T is he who holds the pine-knot torch,
 That seems her blazing path to scorch
Where waves o'er reddening shoals divide.

XLVI.

“With me he now is alway meek,
 But sometimes, chafing in his thrall,
He to my dog will sharply speak,
 Who comes, or comes not at his call.

They both are in my camp below,
From which, I now in hunting weather,
For days can often safely go,
Leaving the two alone together.
But in those years my watch began
His limbs were agile as my own,
And sometimes then the tortured man,
For weeks beyond my search hath flown,
In shades more deep to breathe alone.

XLVII.

“ Yet ever in his wildest mood,
He would some mystic power obey,
Which from that island’s haunted wood
Ne’er let him wander far away,

And alway soon or late I could
Steal on him in his solitude :
While oft, as weaker grew his brain,
And he forgot God's law of blood,
I've tracked the poor, bewildered thing,
Wherever he was famishing ;
And snatched him o'er and o'er again,
From death he sought by fell and flood.

XLVIII.

"And thus as crowding seasons changed,
When many a year was dead and gone,
I 'mid these lakes in manhood ranged,
Where yet in age I wander on,
And still o'er that poor slave I've kept
A vigil that hath never slept;

And while upon this earth I stay,
From *her* I'll still *keep him away*—
From her whom I at last shall see
My own, my own eternally !

XLIX.

“ White-man ! I say not that they lie
Who preach a faith so dark and drear,
That wedded hearts in yon cold sky
Meet not as they were mated here.
But scorning not thy faith, thou must
Stranger, in mine have equal trust ;
The Red-man's faith by Him implanted,
Who souls to both our races granted.
'Thou know'st in life we mingle not,
Death cannot change our different lot !

He who hath placed the White-man's heaven
Where hymns in vapory clouds are chaunted,
 To harps by angel fingers played ;
Not less on his Red children smiles,
To whom a land of souls is given,
 Where in the ruddy west arrayed,
Brighten our blessed hunting isles.

L.

“ There souls again to youth are born,
 A youth that knows no withering !
There, blithe and bland, the breeze of morn
 Fresheneth an eternal Spring
'Mid trees, and flowers and water-falls,
And fountains bubbling from the moss,
And leaves that quiver with delight,

As from their shade the warbler calls,
Or, choiring, glances to the light
On wings which never lose their gloss :
There brooks that bear their buds away,
From branches that will bend above them,
So closely they could not but love them,
To the same bowers again will stray
From which at first they murmuring sever,
Still floating back their blossoms to them,
Still with the same sweet music ever,
Returning yet once more to woo them :
There love, like bird and brook and blossom,
Is young forever in each bosom !

LI.

“Those blissful ISLANDS OF THE WEST!

I've seen myself, at sun-set time,
The golden lake in which they rest ;
Seen too the barques that bear The Blest
Floating toward that fadeless clime
First dark, just as they leave our shore,
Their sides then brightening more and more,
Till in a flood of crimson light
They melted from my straining sight.

—And she, who climbed the storm-swept steep,

She who the foaming wave would dare,
So oft love's vigil here to keep—

Stranger, albeit thou think'st I doat,

I know—I know she watches there !
Watches upon that radiant strand,

Watches to see her lover's boat
Approach 'The Spirit-Land.'

LII.

He ceased, and spoke no more that night,
Though oft, when chillier blew the blast,
I saw him moving in the light
The fire, that he was feeding, cast ;
While I, still wakeful, pondered o'er
His wondrous story more and more.
I thought, not wholly waste the mind
Where FAITH so deep a root could find,
FAITH which both love and life could save,
And keep the first, in age still fond,
Thus blossoming this side the grave
In steadfast trust of fruit beyond.

And when in after years I stood
By INCA-PAH-CHOW's haunted water,
Where long ago that hunter wooed
In early youth its island daughter,
And traced the voiceless solitude
Once witness of his loved one's slaughter—
At that same season of the leaf
In which I heard him tell his grief—
I thought some day I'd weave in rhyme,
That tale of mellow autumn time.

OCCASIONAL POEMS.

MOONLIGHT ON THE HUDSON.

WRITTEN AT WEST POINT.

I'M not romantic, but, upon my word,

There are some moments when one can't help feeling
As if his heart's chords were so strongly stirred

By things around him, that 'tis vain concealing
A little music in his soul still lingers

Whene'er its keys are touched by Nature's fingers :

And even here, upon this settee lying,

With many a sleepy traveller near me snoozing,
Thoughts warm and wild are through my bosom flying,
Like founts when first into the sunshine oozing :

For who can look on mountain, sky and river,
Like these, and then be calm as ever !

Bright DIAN, who, Camilla-like, dost skim yon
Azure fields—Thou who, once earthward bending,
Didst loose thy virgin zone to young Endymion
On dewy Latmos to his arms descending—
Thou whom the world of old on every shore,
Type of thy sez, *Triformis*, did adore :

Tell me—where'er thy silver barque be steering
By bright Italian or soft Persian lands,
Or o'er those island-studded seas careering,
Whose pearl-charged waves dissolve on coral strands ;
Tell me if thou visitest, thou heavenly rover,
A lovelier stream than this the wide world over ?

Doth Achelöus or Araxes flowing

Twin born from Pindus, but ne'er meeting brothers—

Doth Tagus o'er his golden pavement glowing,

Or cradle-freighted Ganges, the reproach of mothers,

The storied Rhine, or far-famed Guadalquiver,

Match they in beauty my own glorious river ?

What though no cloister gray nor ivied column

Along these cliffs their sombre ruins rear ?

What though no frowning tower nor temple solemn

Of tyrants tell and superstition here—

What though that mouldering fort's fast-crumbling walls

Did ne'er enclose a baron's bannered halls—

Its sinking arches once gave back as proud

An echo to the war-blown clarion's peal,

As gallant hearts its battlements did crowd

As ever beat beneath a vest of steel,

When herald's trump on knighthood's haughtiest day

Called forth chivalric host to battle fray :

For here amid these woods did he keep court,

Before whose mighty soul the common crowd

Of heroes, who alone for fame have fought,

Are like the patriarchs' sheaves to heaven's chosen
bowed—

He who his country's eagle taught to soar,

And fired those stars which shine o'er every shore.

And sights and sounds at which the world have wondered

Within these wild ravines have had their birth ;

Young FREEDOM's cannon from these glens have thundered,

And sent their startling voices o'er the earth ;

And not a verdant glade nor mountain hoary
But treasures up within the glorious story.

And yet not rich in high-souled memories only,
Is every moon-kissed headland round me gleaming,
Each caverned glen and leafy valley lonely,
And silver torrent o'er the bald rock streaming :
But such soft fancies here may breathe around,
As make Vaucluse and Clarens hallowed ground.

Where, tell me where, pale watcher of the night—
Thou that to love so oft hast lent its soul,
Since the lorn Lesbian languished 'neath thy light,
Or fated Romeo to his Juliet stole—
Where dost thou find a fitter place on earth
To nurse young love in hearts like theirs to birth ?

Oh, loiter not upon that fairy shore

To watch the lazy barques in distance glide,
When sun-set brightens on their sails no more,
And stern-lights twinkle in the dusky tide,
Loiter not there, young heart, at that soft hour,
What time the Queen of night proclaims love's power.

Even as I gaze, upon my memory's track

Bright as yon coil of light along the deep,
A scene of early youth comes dream-like back,
Where two stand gazing from the tide-washed steep,
A sanguine stripling, just tow'rd manhood flushing,
A girl, scarce yet in ripened beauty blushing.

The hour is his! and while his hopes are soaring

Doubts he that maiden will become his bride ?

Can she resist that gush of wild adoring

Fresh from a heart full-volumed as the tide ?

Tremulous, but radiant, is that peerless daughter

Of loveliness, as is the star-strewn water !

The moist leaves glimmer as they glimmered then,

Alas ! how oft have they been since renewed,

How oft the whip-poor-will, from yonder glen,

Each year has whistled to her callow brood,

How oft have lovers by yon star's same gleam,

Dreamed here of bliss—and wakened from their dream !

But now, bright Peri of the skies, descending

Thy pearly car hangs o'er yon mountain's crest,

And Night, more nearly now each step attending,

As if to hide thy envied place of rest,

Closes at last thy very couch beside,
A matron curtaining a virgin bride.

Farewell ! Though tears on every leaf are starting,
While through the shadowy boughs thy glances quiver,
As of The Good, when Heaven-ward hence departing,
Shines thy last smile upon the placid river.
So—could I fling o'er glory's tide one ray—
Would I too steal from this dark world away

TOWN REPININGS.

RIVER, oh river, thou rovest free
From the mountain height to the fresh blue sea,
Free thyself, while in silver chain
Linking each charm of land and main.
Calling at first thy banded waves
From hill-side thickets and fern-hid caves,
From the splintered crag thou leap'st below,
Through leafy glades at will to flow—
Idling now 'mid the dallying sedge,
Slumbering now by the steep's mossed edge,
With statelier march once more to break
From wooded valley to breezy lake ;

Yet all of these scenes though fair they be
River, oh river, are banned to me !

River, oh river ! upon thy tide
Gaily the freighted vessels glide,
Would that thou thus could'st bear away
The thoughts that burthen my weary day,
Or that I, from all, save them, set free,
Though laden still, might rove with thee.
True that thy waves brief life-time find,
And live at the will of the wanton wind—
True that thou seekest the ocean's flow
To be lost therein for evermoe !
Yet the slave who worships at Honor's shrine,
But toils for a bubble as frail as thine,
But loses his freedom here, to be
Forgotten as soon as in death set free.

THE BOB-O-LINKUM.

THOU vocal sprite—thou feathered troubadour !

In pilgrim weeds through many a clime a ranger,
Com'st thou to doff thy russet suit once more,

And play in foppish trim the masquing stranger ?
Philosophers may teach thy whereabouts and nature ;

But wise, as all of us, perforce, must think 'em,
The school-boy best hath fixed thy nomenclature,
And poets, too, must call thee Bob-O-Linkum.

Say ! art thou, long 'mid forest glooms benighted,
So glad to skim our laughing meadows over—

With our gay orchards here so much delighted,
It makes thee musical thou airy rover?
Or are those buoyant notes the pilfered treasure
Of fairy isles, which thou hast learned to ravish
Of all their sweetest minstrelsy at pleasure,
And, Ariel-like, again on men to lavish?

They tell sad stories of thy mad-cap freaks,
Wherever o'er the land thy pathway ranges;
And even in a brace of wandering weeks,
They say, alike the song and plumage changes:
Here both are gay; and when the buds put forth,
And leafy June is shading rock and river,
Thou are unmatched, blithe warbler of the North,
While through the balmy air thy clear notes quiver.

Joyous, yet tender—was that gush of song
Caught from the brooks, where 'mid its wild flowers
smiling,
The silent prairie listens all day long,
The only captive to such sweet beguiling ;
Or did'st thou, flitting through the verdurous halls
And columned isles of western groves symphonious,
Learn from the tuneful woods, rare madrigals,
To make our flowering pastures here harmonious.

Caught'st thou thy carol from Ottawa maid,
Where, through the liquid fields of wild rice plashing
Brushing the ears from off the burdened blade,
Her birch canoe o'er some lone lake is flashing?
Or did the reeds of some savannah South,
Detain thee while thy northern flight pursuing,

To place those melodies in thy sweet mouth,
The spice-fed winds had taught them in their woo-
ing ?

Unthrifty prodigal !—is no thought of ill
Thy ceaseless roundelay disturbing ever?
Or doth each pulse in choiring cadence still
Throb on in music till at rest forever ?
Yet now in wildered maze of concord floating,
'T would seem that glorious hymning to prolong,
Old Time in hearing thee might fall a-doating,
And pause to listen to thy rapturous song !

WHAT IS SOLITUDE.

Not in the shadowy wood
 Not in the crag-hung glen,
Not where the echoes brood
 In caves untrod by men ;
Not by the bleak sea shore,
 Where barren surges break,
Not on the mountain hoar,
 Not by the breeze less lake ;
Not on the desert plain
 Where man hath never stood,
Whether on isle or main—
 Not there is solitude !

Birds are in woodland bowers ;
Voices in lonely dells ;
Streams to the listening hours
Talk in earth's secret cells ;
Over the gray-ribbed sand.
Breathe Ocean's frothy lips ;
Over the still lake's strand
The wild flower tow'rd it dips ;
Pluming the mountain's crest
Life tosses in its pines ;
Coursing the desert's breast
Life in the steed's mane shines.

Leave—if thou would'st be lonely—
Leave Nature for the crowd ;
Seek there for one—one only
With kindred mind endowed !

'There—as with Nature erst
Closely thou would'st commune—
'The deep soul-music nursed
In either heart, attune !
Heart-wearied thou wilt own,
Vainly that phantom wooed,
That thou at last hast known
What is true Solitude !

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

TEACH thee their language ? sweet, I know no tongue,
No mystic art those gentle things declare,
I ne'er could trace the schoolman's trick among
Created things, so delicate and rare :

Their language ? Prythee ! why they are themselves
But bright thoughts syllabled to shape and hue,
The tongue that erst was spoken by the elves,
When tenderness as yet within the world was new.

And oh, do not their soft and starry eyes—

Now bent to earth, to heaven now meekly pleading,
Their incense fainting as it seeks the skies,

Yet still from earth with freshening hope receding—
Say, do not these to every heart declare,

With all the silent eloquence of truth,
The language that they speak is Nature's prayer,
To give her back those spotless days of youth ?

INDIAN SUMMER, 1828.

LIGHT as love's smiles the silvery mist at morn
Floats in loose flakes along the limpid river ;
The Blue-bird's notes upon the soft breeze borne,
As high in air he carols, faintly quiver ;
The weeping birch, like banners idly waving,
Bends to the stream, its spicy branches laving ;
Beaded with dew the witch-elm's tassels shiver ;
The timid rabbit from the furze is peeping,
And from the springy spray the squirrel's gaily leaping.

I love thee, Autumn, for thy scenery, ere
The blasts of winter chase the varied dyes

That richly deck the slow-declining year ;
I love the splendor of thy sun-set skies,
The gorgeous hues that tinge each failing leaf,
Lovely as beauty's cheek, as woman's love too, brief ;
I love the note of each wild bird that flies,
As on the wind he pours his parting lay,
And wings his loitering flight to summer climes away.

Oh Nature ! fondly I still turn to thee
With feelings fresh as e'er my childhood's were ;—
Though wild and passion-tost my youth may be,
Toward thee I still the same devotion bear ;
To thee—to thee—though health and hope no more
Life's wasted verdure may to me restore—
Still—still, child-like I come, as when in prayer
I bowed my head upon a mother's knee,
And deemed the world, like her, all truth and purity.

TO AN AUTUMN ROSE.

TELL her I love her—love her for those eyes

Now soft with feeling, radiant now with mirth

Which, like a lake reflecting autumn skies,

Reveal two heavens here to us on Earth—

The one in which their soulful beauty lies,

And that wherein such soulfulness has birth :

Go to my lady ere the season flies,

And the rude winter comes thy bloom to blast—

Go! and with all of Eloquence thou hast,

The burning story of my love discover,

And if the theme should fail, alas! to move her,

Tell her when youth's gay summer-flowers are past,

Like thee, my love, will blossom to the last !

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY.

THE snow yet in the hollow lies ;
But, where by shelvy hill 't is seen,
A thousand rills—its waste supplies—
Are trickling over beds of green
Down in the meadow glancing wings
Flit in the sun-shine round a tree,
Where still a frosted apple clings,
Regale for early Chickadee :

And chesnut buds begin to swell,
Where Flying-squirrels peep to know
If from the tree-top, yet, 't were well
To sail on leathery wing below—

As gently shy and timorsome,
Still holds she back who should be mine ;
Come, Spring, to her coy bosom, come,
And warm it tow'rd her Valentine !

Come, Spring, and with the breeze that calls
The wind-flower by the hill-side rill,
The soft breeze that by orchard walls
First dallies with the daffodill—
Come lift the tresses from her cheek,
And let me see the blush divine,
That mantling there, those curls would seek
To hide from her true Valentine.

Come, Spring, and with the Red-breast's note,
That tells of bridal tenderness,

Where on the breeze he'll warbling float
Afar his nesting mate to bless—
Come, whisper 't is not alway Spring !
When birds may mate on every spray—
That April boughs cease blossoming !
With love it is not always May !

Come, touch her heart with thy soft tale,
Of tears within the floweret's cup,
Of fairest things that soonest fail,
Of hopes we vainly garner up—
And while, that gentle heart to melt,
Like mingled wreath, such tale you twine,
Whisper what lasting bliss were felt
In lot shared with her Valentine.

THE END.

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